

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4554

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 2615

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, DR
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS

1. WE WERE INFORMED BY THE PALACE YESTERDAY (SUNDAY) THAT I WOULD BE PRESENTING CREDENTIALS TODAY AT NOON, WHICH I DID. WE CAN NO DOUBT EXPECT TO SEE CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY ON THIS IN THE LOCAL PRESS TOMORROW (ELECTION DAY). THE PRESENTATION ITSELF, HOWEVER, WAS RELATIVELY LOW-KEY. WHILE THE CEREMONY WAS COVERED BY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHERS, THE CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT BALAGUER WAS VIRTUALLY PRIVATE, SINCE WE COULD NOT BE OVERHEARD BY ANY OTHERS PRESENT.

2. BALAGUER RECEIVED ME WITH WARMTH AND EXTENDED THE CONVERSATION SOMEWHAT LONGER THAN EXPECTED. HE APPEARED CALM AND RESTED AND VERY MUCH IN CONTROL OF HIMSELF PHYSICALLY. THE ONLY EXCEPTION WAS THAT HE OBVIOUSLY COULD NOT SEE MY HAND WHEN I PUT IT OUT TO GREET HIM AND I WAS THEREFORE FORCED TO REACH FOR HIS BOTH THEN AND AT THE TIME I GAVE HIM MY CREDENTIALS. DCM AND DEFATT AGREE BALAGUER LOOKED IN UNEXPECTEDLY GOOD HEALTH AFTER HIS STRENUOUS CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY. HIS CONVERSATION WAS INTERESTED AND COMPLETELY COHERENT.

3. THERE WAS NO OCCASION TO USE THE STATEMENT WHICH WE PROVIDED TO THE DEPARTMENT. I DREW ON IT, HOWEVER, TO
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PRESENT THE GREETINGS OF THE SECRETARY. BALAGUER RESPONDED BY RECALLING THE SECRETARY'S ROLE IN THE D.R. IN 1965, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS HELPING TO PROVIDE A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION TO THE PROBLEMS THEN CURRENT. BALAGUER LATER ASKED ME TO RETURN HIS GREETINGS TO THE SECRETARY AND, RECALLING THE WARMTH OF HIS RECEPTION AT THE TIME OF THE SIGNING OF THE CANAL TREATIES, ASKED ME TO PASS ALONG HIS

WARM GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT CARTER AS WELL.

4. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF BALAGUER'S WILLINGNESS TO TALK TO MENTION SEVERAL MATTERS OF CURRENT INTEREST. AFTER BALAGUER REFERRED TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S INTEREST IN LATIN AMERICA AS RECENTLY EVINced BY THE PRESIDENT'S STAND ON THE CANAL, HIS VISIT TO SOUTH AMERICA AND MRS. CARTER'S VISIT TO GUATEMALA AND COSTA RICA, I NOTED THAT THIS INTEREST APPLIED WITH PARTICULAR FORCE TO THE CARIBBEAN AS WELL. THE AREA APPROACH TO CARIBBEAN PROBLEMS WAS IMPORTANT AND THERE WOULD BE A MEETING TOMORROW OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP DONORS IN PARIS AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION. BALAGUER EXPRESSED HIS OWN INTEREST IN GREATER FOCUS ON THE CARIBBEAN AS AN INTEGRAL WHOLE.

5. WE TALKED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF IFI PROJECTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND THE ROLE USAID PLAYED IN COMPLEMENTING SUCH DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AT THE LEVEL OF THE POOREST MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. I SAID I HOPED WE COULD COUNT ON HIS ONGOING SUPPORT IN MAKING OUR ASSISTANCE PROJECTS FULLY EFFECTIVE. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED IN STATE 107370, I NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING ATTENTION TO THE TWIN PROBLEMS OF FOOD SUPPLY AND POPULATION GROWTH, SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING BOTH THE NUTRITIONAL AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM. PRESIDENT BALAGUER
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AGREED ON BOTH COUNTS AND PICKED UP MY COMMENT ON POPULATION BY NOTING THAT THERE HAD BEEN A SLIGHT DECREASE IN THE POPULATION GROWTH RATE IN THE D.R. HE TOOK THIS AS AN ENCOURAGING SIGN THOUGH NOT AS ONE THAT EFFORTS IN FAMILY PLANNING COULD BE PERMITTED TO SLACKEN.

6. IN TALKING ABOUT THE IFI PROJECTS HERE, THE PRESIDENT MENTIONED WITH APPRECIATION THE HELP THAT HAD BEEN GIVEN HIM BY PRESIDENT JOHNSON IN SECURING AN IDB LOAN TO HELP FINANCE THE IMPORTANT TAVERA DAM PROJECT. HE SAID HE HAD APPROACHED PRESIDENT JOHNSON AT PUNTA DEL ESTE FOR HELP IN THIS REGARD AND THAT HE REMAINED APPRECIATIVE OF THE RESULTS OF THAT APPROACH.

7. WHILE THE TIMING OF THE CEREMONY SUGGESTS THAT IT WILL BE USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, I BELIEVE THAT ANY EXPLOITATION OF THIS STRICTLY CEREMONIAL AFFAIR WILL BE TRANSITORY AND CONTAINABLE. (THE FRENCH AND CHILEAN AMBASSADORS PRESENTED THEIR CREDENTIALS THE SAME DAY.)
YOST

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